



David Sanders, Ph.D.  
Director

# County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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October 28, 2004

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To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
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From: David Sanders, Ph.D.   
Director

## **MOLINA MOTION JUNE 21, 2004 RE: MANDATED REPORTING EDUCATION**

This memo is in response to the June 21, 2004 motion by Supervisor Molina in which the Department and the Chief Administrative Office were directed to explore the availability of resources within the existing budget to fund the following service activities:

1. Utilize the existing Family and Children's Index (FCI), a database that enhances the quality of investigations; and
2. Further expand the mandated reporting training that the Child Protection Hotline staff offers to schools, hospitals and other community organizations; and
3. Further expand the mandated reporting "open houses" held in DCFS regional offices for schools, hospitals, law enforcement and other community organizations; and
4. Expand countywide training for the faith-based community on abuse/neglect-related issues revealed during privileged communications; and
5. Promote the DCFS Volunteer Community Liaison program.

Under the mission of improving outcomes for children and families, the Department is charged with ensuring that children grow up safe, physically and emotionally healthy, educated and in permanent homes. The three key goals for the Department are improved permanence, improved safety, and reduced reliance on detention. While mandated reporting enforcement does not come under the jurisdiction of the Department, providing training to mandated reporters fits with the Department's goal of improving safety for children throughout Los Angeles County.

Upon review of each of these service activities, it was determined that only the Family and Children's Index is funded within the existing budget. We are currently exploring the availability of resources within the existing budget to fund the remaining service activities.

### **The Family and Children's Index (FCI)**

The Family and Children's Index (FCI) is a computerized interagency data information system, which is designed to better identify children and families who may be at-risk of abuse and neglect. FCI's centralized database ties together basic data about families and children that have had relevant contacts with public agencies and have been identified as "at risk" for abuse or neglect. Participating departments identify these at-risk families and children and update FCI with basic identifying information. FCI is an additional resource for participating departments in providing pertinent information on contacts and events involving other agencies with an at-risk family.

From September 2003 until June 2004 the database has received 5,648 queries, with the Sheriff's Department and our Department being the largest users of the system. Please refer to the accompanying FCI Pilot Usage report.

In an effort to enhance inter-agency collaboration FCI managers from each participating Department meet on a monthly basis to coordinate FCI implementation and to discuss ways to improve the use of FCI. In addition to our Department, participant agencies include the Departments of Health Services, Mental Health, Public Social Services, the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff Department, and the Department of Probation. In addition, we are working collaboratively to expand FCI usage to include the Los Angeles Police Department, the Office of the Coroner, and the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools.

Currently, the Department is utilizing FCI as a pilot project in the Pomona Office located in Service Planning Area 3. Our Department plans to expand FCI to full department-wide use by January 2005.

### **Mandated Reporter Training**

At this time, through an existing funding source, the Department's Training Division will provide Mandated Reporter Training to Departmental staff. The training that the Department's Child Protection Hotline provides to the community, however, will continue to be provided on a limited basis depending on the availability of staff. Utilizing our existing resources, the Department's Training Division will provide on average one training session per month, including 50 to 75 persons per session, in a rotating series of training sessions through the three DCFS Services Bureaus. Each Services Bureau will be asked to invite, for their respective training sessions, mandated reporters and faith-based community members within the individual communities that they serve.

Currently, Hotline Assistant Regional Administrators or Supervising Children's Social Workers provide training to the community when requested. Over the summer more than 500 mandated reporters were trained. While every effort is made to accommodate requests that the Hotline receives from the community, the Hotline's first priority remains ensuring adequate Hotline telephone and supervisory coverage. In addition, requests for training are also received by the Department's Office of Public Affairs and by our regional offices. Currently the costs associated with staffing these training sessions are either absorbed as part of normal operations or, when necessary, are charged to the Department's overtime funds.

### **Open Houses**

During the 2003 – 2004 fiscal year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation provided funding to cover the cost of open houses hosted by DCFS regional offices for the provision of mandated reported training to schools, hospitals, law enforcement and other community agencies. We are in agreement with the Board that these are valuable opportunities to enhance inter-agency and community collaboration and, for that reason, for fiscal year 2004-2005, each Services Bureau will invite mandated reporters and faith-based community members to be included in the mandated reporter training provided by the Department's training division.

### **Training the Faith- Based Community**

During the 2003 – 2004 fiscal year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation also provided funding to cover the cost of providing community forums and mandated reporter training sessions to the Faith-Based Community. We value these forums as they provide opportunities to enhance collaboration and communication between the Department and the Faith-Based Community, particularly in instances when ministers obtain child abuse/neglect-related information. As such, for fiscal year 2004 – 2005, each Services Bureau will invite mandated reporters and faith-based

community members to be included in the mandated reporter training provided by the Department's training division.

**Community Liaison Program**

Currently, each office has a staff person who serves as the liaison to Law Enforcement, schools and hospitals and works collaboratively with the agencies and schools in their area in addition to attending monthly meetings. These liaisons are staff volunteers who perform these tasks in addition to their other job duties. The Department has also implemented liaisons for Domestic Violence issues.

In summary, I would like to thank the Board of Supervisors for its support of the significant role that Departmental mandated reporter training plays in DCFS' goal of collaboration with other agencies and the community toward achieving improved outcomes in child safety. For any questions, please feel free to contact me at (213) 351-5600 or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5530.

DS:RC:JR:lw

Attachment

C: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel